

Legislative Testimony
HB 5630 AAC The Establishment Of Licensure For AN Advanced
Practice Dental Hygiene Practitioner
Public Health Committee
Monday, March 16, 2009
Scott Bialik, D.D.S.

My name is Scott Bialik. I am a practicing Pediatric Dentist in Brookfield, CT. I am a past president of the Connecticut Society of Pediatric Dentists (CSPD) and a past Pediatric Dental Attending at Yale New Haven Hospital.

Through the years I have instructed many a dentist, resident, and dental student on how to properly treat children through behavior management and psychology. Treating children in a dental setting is a very tricky proposition all together. Treating the undeserved children in our state makes this an almost impossible proposition for those not adequately trained nor prepared. There has been many a dentist who has practiced for years, unable to treat young children. Many new dentists right out of school are woefully unprepared for such an undertaking. To add insult to injury, the youth of today are more medically compromised than ever. We have seen an explosion of syndromes, disabilities, disorders, etc. Just look at the boom in the sheer numbers of children diagnosed with autism today if you need proof. Most dentists after receiving 4 years of training in a qualified dental school and then an additional training in a residency are unable to treat these children adequately. I fail to see how increasing the training of a Dental Hygienist by a mere two years would make them as qualified as a Pediatric Dentist who has received at least 4 years of education at a Dental School, and at least an additional 2 years of training in a specialty residency. Imagine yourself having a child with special needs. Who would you want to treat your child?

The trick to treating and delivering care to these children requires a "dental team". This team needs to function as one and not be splintered, and this bill would do exactly that.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and American Dental Association (ADA) have both acknowledged this and have adopted the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry's (AAPD) idea of the Dental Home. In fact Connecticut's own Dr. Ardel Willson (Director of Oral Health, Department of Public Health) has embraced this very concept and has received a grant to create a pilot program called "Home by One."

Also, to the credit of the legislature of Connecticut, last year you approved the restructuring of the Husky System. Because of that, I have been told that over 400 new dentists have signed up to participate and treat our underprivileged population.

Furthermore, it has been reported that approximately 80% of the Pediatric Dentists who are members of the CSPD are currently signed up as well. I myself have seen 184 new Medicaid patients since October 1, 2008 (5 months). These children have not only received preventive care, but approximately 75 to 80% of these children have

needed and received additional services such as fillings, extractions, and crowns. I know that many of my fellow colleagues can report similar numbers.

In such tumultuous economic times, is it not prudent to measure the impact of newly established and existing systems that do not burden our state's budget before embarking on such an expensive proposition as proposed in HB 5630?

HB 5630's stated purpose is, "To increase access to dental care for undeserved populations through use of advanced dental hygiene practitioners." I fail to see how this bill addresses the issue of access to care of under-served populations, unless you are suggesting that the underprivileged children in this state do not deserve the same quality of care as the rest of our children.

I would like to propose an alternate idea to your committee. How about a tax on all foods sold in our state that contain more than 25% sugar, such as sodas and candies. Use that money towards health related expenses for the underprivileged. Not only would that help the budget, but would also promote good health, decrease the incidence of obesity, diabetes, etc. in our population.

Scott A. Bialik, D.D.S.
scott@drbialik.com